

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): An interfacing method, wherein a plurality of network printers, which are provided with different kinds of film for image reproduction, are connected by an interface unit to an image information network, the method comprising the steps of, in the interface unit:

i) recognizing available kinds of film with respect to each of the network printers, which are connected to the interface unit,

ii) selecting a network printer, which is among the plurality of the network printers and which corresponds to a kind of film coinciding with an output request, in accordance with the results of said recognition, and

iii) giving an output instruction, which coincides with said output request, to the thus selected network printer.

2. (original): An interfacing method as defined in Claim 1 wherein, in cases where there is no network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, a network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film closest to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, is selected as the network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, and

an output instruction, which specifies said closest kind of film, is given as said output instruction, which coincides with said output request, to the thus selected network printer.

3. (currently amended): An interfacing method, wherein at least one network printer among a plurality of network printers, which are provided with different kinds of film for image reproduction, is connected by each of at least two interface units to an image information network, the method comprising the steps of, in each interface unit:

i) recognizing available kinds of film with respect to each of the at least one network printer, which is connected to ~~the~~ an interface unit,

ix \ ii) sending information, which represents the results of said recognition, to the other interface unit,

iii) selecting a network printer, which is among the plurality of the network printers and which corresponds to a kind of film coinciding with an output request, in accordance with the results of said recognition and the results of recognition received from ~~the other~~ another interface unit, or transferring said output request to the other interface unit, which is connected to the network printer to be selected, and

iv) giving an output instruction, which coincides with said output request, to the thus selected network printer.

4. (original): An interfacing method as defined in Claim 3 wherein, in cases where there is no network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, a network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film closest to the kind of film coinciding

with said output request, is selected as the network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, or said output request is transferred to the other interface unit, which is connected to the network printer to be selected, and

an output instruction, which specifies said closest kind of film, is given as said output instruction, which coincides with said output request, to the thus selected network printer.

5-8. (canceled).

A. 9. (currently amended): An interfacing method as defined in any of Claims 1 to ~~8~~4 wherein, in cases where each of the network printers connected to the interface unit is designed to send a monitor signal, which represents a state concerning output, in accordance with a special-purpose protocol, and each of a plurality of terminals, which constitute the image information network, is provided with general-purpose displaying software functions and operates under management with one of plural kinds of operating systems having different forms, said monitor signal having been sent in accordance with said special-purpose protocol is converted into a signal according to a protocol, which is adapted to displaying with said displaying software functions.

10. (original): An interfacing method as defined in Claim 9 wherein said special-purpose protocol is a Simple Network Management Protocol, said displaying software functions is a World Wide Web browser, and said protocol adapted to displaying with said displaying software functions is a HyperText Transfer Protocol.

11. (original): An interface unit for connecting a plurality of network printers, which are provided with different kinds of film for image reproduction, to an image information network, the interface unit comprising:

i) a film kind recognizing means for recognizing available kinds of film with respect to each of the network printers, which are connected to the interface unit, and

ii) a printer selecting means for selecting a network printer, which is among the plurality of the network printers and which corresponds to a kind of film coinciding with an output request, in accordance with the results of said recognition having been carried out by said film kind recognizing means,

wherein an output instruction, which coincides with said output request, is given to the network printer having been selected by said printer selecting means.

12. (original): An interface unit as defined in Claim 11 wherein, in cases where there is no network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, said printer selecting means selects a network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film closest to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, as the network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, and

an output instruction, which specifies said closest kind of film, is given as said output instruction, which coincides with said output request, to the network printer having been selected by said printer selecting means.

13.(currently amended) An interface unit, comprising a group of at least two interface units, each of the at least two interface units connecting at least one network printer among a plurality of network printers, which are provided with different kinds of film for image reproduction, to an image information network, each interface unit comprising:

i) a film kind recognizing means for recognizing available kinds of film with respect to each of the at least one network printer, which is connected to ~~the~~an interface unit, and sending information, which represents the results of said recognition, to the other interface unit, and

A. ii) a printer selecting means for selecting a network printer, which is among the plurality of the network printers and which corresponds to a kind of film coinciding with an output request, in accordance with the results of said recognition having been carried out by said film kind recognizing means and the results of recognition received from ~~the other~~another interface unit, or transferring said output request to the other interface unit, which is connected to the network printer to be selected, wherein an output instruction, which coincides with said output request, is given to the network printer having been selected by said printer selecting means.

14. (original): An interface unit as defined in Claim 13 wherein, in cases where there is no network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, said printer selecting means selects a network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film closest to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, as the network printer, which corresponds to the kind of film coinciding with said output request, or transfers said output request to the other interface unit, which is connected to the network printer to be selected, and

an output instruction, which specifies said closest kind of film, is given as said output instruction, which coincides with said output request, to the network printer having been selected by said printer selecting means.

15-18. (canceled).

A. 19. (currently amended): An interface unit as defined in any of Claims 11 to ~~18~~14 wherein, in cases where each of the network printers connected to the interface unit is designed to send a monitor signal, which represents a state concerning output, in accordance with a special-purpose protocol, and each of a plurality of terminals, which constitute the image information network, is provided with general-purpose displaying software functions and operates under management with one of plural kinds of operating systems having different forms, the interface unit further comprises a protocol converting means for converting said monitor signal, which has been sent in accordance with said special-purpose protocol, into a signal according to a protocol, which is adapted to displaying with said displaying software functions.

20. (original): An interface unit as defined in Claim 19 wherein said special-purpose protocol is a Simple Network Management Protocol, said displaying software functions is a World Wide Web browser, and said protocol adapted to displaying with said displaying software functions is a HyperText Transfer Protocol.

21. (currently amended): A client apparatus, which is provided with the functions of interface unit as defined in any of Claims 11 to ~~18~~14.

22-35. (canceled).

36. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 11, wherein the kind of film is defined by a film size.

37. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 12, wherein the kind of film is defined by a film size.

38. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 13, wherein the kind of film is defined by a film size.

39. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 14, wherein the kind of film is defined by a film size.

40. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 11, wherein the kind of film is defined by a film base color.

41. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 12, wherein the kind of film is defined by a film base color.

42. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 13, wherein the kind of film is defined by a film base color.

43. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 14, wherein the kind of film is defined by a film base color.

44. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 1, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.

45. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 2, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.

46. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 3, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.

47. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 4, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.

48. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 11, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.

49. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 12, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.

50. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 13, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.

51. (new): The interface unit as defined in Claim 14, wherein the selection of a network printer based on the output request is automated.
